Non-provisional Patent Application

for

TRIPLE CHANCE SLOT MACHINE GAME

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Triple Chance Slot Machine Game

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This Application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application, Serial No.

5   60/462,948 entitled *Triple Play Slot Machine Game*, filed with the U.S. Patent and

Trademark Office on April 15, 2003 by the inventor herein.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

10   The present invention relates to gaming machines of the type generally referred to

as slot machines, and in particular, the invention provides a new and improved game to

be played on such a machine. This invention relates generally to games of chance such

as would be found in casinos and other legal gambling establishments and more

particularly to electronic gaming systems that can be used as slot machines. The game is

15   enabled, in particular, for video gambling machines, computer games, or other electronic

or mechanical devices.

BACKGROUND OF THE ART

In the gaming business there are two kinds of games; one in which the results

depend solely on luck, and another in which the results depend on the skill of the players.

20   Examples of games depending solely on luck include basic slot machines, roulette, and

craps. Examples of games depending on the players' skill include draw poker and

blackjack.

Although, the gaming industry has undergone a significant expansion in recent years, the most popular form of gaming continues to be centered about slot machines. They account for approximately three-fourths of the total volume of all gambling activities in the United States. Because of the volume of slot machine gaming, numerous

5   devices, rules, and methods of operation have been proposed and introduced in efforts to improve the games.

Over the years and in keeping with the changes in technology, slot machines have evolved from purely mechanical devices, through electro-mechanical devices to present day electronic slot machines, most of which are controlled entirely by computer. Most

10   present day slot machines have a video screen to display symbols based on graphic data stored in memory associated with a computer processor.

Video slot machine games are generally played on an electronic video gaming machine that uses a video screen display to show images of predefined symbols to a player. Computer controls carried on a printed circuit board mounted on the interior of

15   the gaming machine electronically randomize the symbols, activate the game sequence in response to input by a player, cause the symbols to be displayed on the video screen display, and analyze the results to determine winning and losing combinations. The computer controls also affect payouts to the player based on the amount of the player's wager and the rank of winning combinations of symbols.

20   The higher the combination achieved by the player, the greater the player's winnings based on the number of coins, tokens or credits wagered by the player. Typically, a payout schedule is posted on the gaming machine to advise the player of the payoffs available for certain winning combinations.

Nevertheless, players have become bored with traditional video games. Players prefer to play machines that have pay tables with high payouts for the types of winning combinations that are achievable. With the growth that has occurred in the gaming machine market, there is intense competition among manufacturers to supply various

5   existing and new venues. Gaming casino operators are desirous of having different types of electronic video games to offer to players. When selecting a supplier of gaming machines, the operator of a venue will often pay close attention to the popularity of various games with their patrons. Therefore, gaming machine manufacturers are keen to devise games, which are popular with players, as a mechanism for improving sales.

10   Despite numerous improvements in the quality and variety of gaming machines made over the years, there remains a need for improved game machines and methods that provide more attractive machine play and associated entertainment. Although there have been attempts to improve upon existing games and to develop new games of chance, there exists a need for a game that more closely meets the player's needs for excitement,

15   risk, quickly and easily understood play, and possibility of success. At the same time, the game must meet the casinos' prerequisite for profitability from the use of the game.

A need exists for a wagering game that is intended to be played in gambling casinos, that is simple to learn and play, and that results in increased revenues for the casino. There is a need for new video gaming machines that are capable of encouraging a

20   high volume of play while at the same time offering what the players consider to be good pay tables. Furthermore, there is a need to provide new and interesting electronic video games that attract players and that can increase the volume of wagering in each gaming machine.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention fulfills these needs. It is a fast-paced game of simple consistent rules, player participation, choice of risk offered by a variety of games, and corresponding to varying payout. The house edge is fairly derived and players will detect

5   this fairness through the payout odds. These features will increase the number of players to the game, both experienced and inexperienced players, generating player satisfaction and profitability to the casino.

Primary objects are to provide: (a) game concepts, (b) method steps for play of a round, and (c) software programming concepts for apparatus enabling a slot machine

10   game in which a player can play a plurality of hands with multiple chances to obtain a winning combination and can select to hold some of the random elements for an additional chance to obtain a winning combination.

Another object of the present invention is straightforward entertainment with some of the atmosphere of a casino. A related object of the present invention is to

15   provide an enjoyable gambling game.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a game that will be easy for players to learn.

A further object is implementation of supervision and control of the flow of a slot machine game by a computer software program.

20   Another object is to provide visible winning results promptly for entertainment purposes, or, additionally, for wagering such that a casino atmosphere of chance is available for a single, or for a plurality of players, in a single round of a slot machine game.

Another object is to enable a player to play more than one hand in a single round of the slot machine game being played.

It is a still further object of the invention to provide a video gaming machine apparatus, which displays a new and interesting game that encourages a high amount of individual player interest while maintaining acceptable payback percentages.

A further object of the present invention is to enable adaptation of the invention to usage independent of a gaming establishment, including individual personal usage.

The above and other objects, features, and advantages of the present invention are described in more detail with reference to the accompanying drawings.

According to a first aspect, the present invention provides a video gaming machine including: display means arranged to display a game being played on the machine; game initiating means to initiate a game on the machine; and game control means responsive to the initiating means to control the playing of the game, characterized in that the game enables a player to play a game based on a combination of luck and skill. The display means is arranged to display a plurality of indicia in a first hand, each indicia being associated with random elements according to a selected game. The control means is characterized by evaluating such first hand based on predetermined winning combinations and awarding a prize to the player, in the event indicia of such elements creates a winning combination. If such first hand does not create a winning combination, the control means causes the display means to display a second hand. The control means evaluates such second hand based on predetermined winning combinations and awards a prize to the player, in the event indicia of such elements in such second hand creates a winning combination. The control means continue to cause the display means to display

additional hands until a predetermined number of non-winning combinations has been displayed. The control means is further characterized by including indicia selection means arranged to allow a player to select some indicia in such final display to 'hold' selected elements, and to enable continued play by displaying additional indicia to

5 complete a slot according to the game being played based on the indicia being 'held'.

Applicant knows of no slot machine that gives a player the opportunity to draw three 'hands' for a single bet. If none of the first three draw 'hands' is a winning hand, the player can hold elements of the third hand to enable a fourth opportunity to establish a winning 'hand'. Furthermore, the slot machine game described herein enables

10 simultaneous play of a plurality of lines for increased enjoyment.

In a preferred embodiment, the display means is a touch sensitive video screen and the player selects indicia by touching areas of the screen on which the selected indicia are displayed; however, other selection mechanisms are also possible, such as buttons indicating grid references on the display.

15 Whether solely for amusement or for entertainment with wagering, an electronic video game machine can be used. Such sets of indicia can be displayed in an electronic or other machine play apparatus.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

20 The above and other features, aspects, and advantages of the present invention are considered in more detail, in relation to the following description of embodiments thereof shown in the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a flow chart for describing procedural steps of a specific embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 2 is an illustration of a slot machine incorporating the present invention; and

FIG. 3 is a block diagram illustration of processing components for performing

5 functions according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The invention summarized above and defined by the enumerated claims may be better understood by referring to the following detailed description, which should be read

10 in conjunction with the accompanying drawings. This detailed description of an embodiment, set out below to enable one to build and use an implementation of the invention, is not intended to limit the invention, but to serve as a particular example thereof. Those skilled in the art should appreciate that they may readily use the conception and specific embodiment disclosed as a basis for modifying or designing

15 other methods and systems for carrying out the same purposes of the present invention. Those skilled in the art should also realize that such equivalent assemblies do not depart from the spirit and scope of the invention in its broadest form.

In the following detailed description, the methodology of the embodiments will be described and it is to be understood that it is within the capabilities of a non-inventive

20 worker in the art to introduce the methodology on any standard microprocessor based gaming machine by means of appropriate programming.

In prior slot machine games, a single slot of three or more elements is displayed and analyzed for a single player. The present invention enables a single player to play a plurality of slots, simultaneously.

In a first embodiment a standard deck of 52 cards is established for each reel to
5   comprise a slot for such a single round by software control, which also achieves a promptly executed round of play, notwithstanding that more than one hand can be played by a single player. The number of reels per slot is determined by the style of game being played.

Whether solely for amusement or for entertainment with wagering, in a first
10   embodiment, standard designations for playing cards are utilized. The slot machine game may be a variety of poker. The player makes that choice before the cards are dealt, and that choice provides certain, but limited, mechanics for play of a round that are implemented by concepts taught herein.

The apparatus for home or private club play enables selective determination if
15   wagering is to be involved.

Referring to Figure 1, play begins when a player presents a wager at station 10, which can include an administrative fee for management of the game, as well as the "ante" to participate. Such a quantitatively fixed wager is made for each hand/slot, if that player selects to play more than one hand/slot. A minimum and maximum for
20   competitive wagering can be prescribed for an individual round. Present concepts can provide for handling differing wagering amounts for one or more players.

At station 13, a first hand of a predetermined number of cards is displayed (as if dealt face up) from multiple decks of 52 cards. For example, for a standard five-card

poker hand, a first reel randomly displays one element from the 52-card deck, that element is removed from the remaining four reels; a second reel randomly displays one element from the remaining 51-card deck, that element is removed from the remaining three reels; a third reel randomly displays one element from the remaining 50-card deck,

5   that element is removed from the remaining two reels; a fourth reel randomly displays one element from the remaining 49-card deck, that element is removed from the remaining reel; a fifth reel randomly displays one element from the remaining 48-card deck.

The first hand is compared to a first Table of Values at station 16. If the player

10   has a winning combination according to such first Table of Values as determined at station 19, a payout on the wager is made 22 and the game is concluded. Otherwise, play of the game proceeds to station 25 where a second hand of a predetermined number of cards is displayed (as if dealt face up) from multiple decks of 52 cards, as described above. In an alternate embodiment, such second hand may be dealt beginning with the

15   remaining 47-card deck. The second hand is compared to the first Table of Values at station 28. If the player has a winning combination in such second hand according to such first Table of Values as determined at station 31, a payout on the wager is made 22 and the game is concluded. Otherwise, play of the game proceeds to station 34 where a third hand of a predetermined number of cards is displayed (as if dealt face up) from

20   multiple decks of 52 cards, as described above. In an alternate embodiment, such third hand may be dealt beginning with the remaining 42-card deck, if the same deck had been used to display such second hand at station 25. The third hand is compared to the first Table of Values at station 37. If the player has a winning combination in the third hand

according to such first Table of Values as determined at station 40, a payout on the wager 22 is made and the game is concluded.

In the embodiment described herein, up to three hands are displayed in order for the player to try to obtain a winning combination. The number of hands need not be so limited. Any predetermined number of hands may be used.

After the last hand has been display and if no winning combination has yet been achieved, the player may be given an additional opportunity to establish a winning combination. The player evaluates the cards in the last hand based on his or her skill or knowledge in establishing elements that are most likely to lead to the best combination available, according to the player, considering the variety of game to be played. At station 43, the player selects elements to hold. Next, cards as needed are dealt to the hand for the player, according to the variety of game being played, from the remaining cards in the deck as indicated at 46. For example, in a five-card poker game, if two elements have been selected to be held, then the player would receive three cards to complete his or her poker hand. Such three cards are randomly selected from the cards remaining in the deck. The final hand is compared to a second Table of Values at station 49. In general, the second Table of Values would have lower payouts for winning combinations as compared to the first Table of Values. If the player has a winning combination according to such second Table of Values as determined at station 52, a payout on the wager is made 55 and the game is complete. If no winning combination is achieved the game is concluded. In some embodiments, an additional wager may be required to enable such additional chance.

In an alternate embodiment, after the last hand has been evaluated against the first Table of Values, the player may elect to have an additional hand dealt to be the hand from which elements are selected to be held, instead of using the last hand. The player evaluates the cards in the additional hand based on his or her skill or knowledge in establishing elements that are most likely to lead to the best combination available, according to the player, considering the variety of game to be played. The player selects elements to hold at station 43. Next, cards as needed are dealt to the hand for the player, according to the variety of game being played, from the remaining cards in the deck as indicated at 46. The final hand is compared to the second Table of Values at station 49. If the player has a winning combination according to the second Table of Values as determined at station 52, a payout on the wager is made 55 and the game is complete. If no winning combination is achieved the game is concluded.

In a computerized embodiment of the game, each poker hand is displayed in a horizontal presentation of cards on a video screen, and is referred to as a "slot". In an alternate embodiment, a player can play a plurality of slots/hands. In versions in which wagering is involved, a separate wager is required for each slot/hand.

In the case of multiple slots, if, at the end of the last cycle, indicated at 40, there is more than one slot/hand without a winning combination, the player may select the slot/hand to use for the additional chance. Selection of such slot is based on such player's skill and knowledge of the selected variety of poker to obtain a higher-ranking poker hand. Once the slot is selected, play continues from station 43, as described above.

In an alternate embodiment in which multiple slots are played, the player may elect to have an additional hand dealt to be evaluated against the second Table of Values.

For example, in the case in which three slots are played, if all three slots have a winning hand, a fourth hand may be dealt. The player evaluates the cards in the fourth hand and selects elements to hold, as described above. Next, cards as needed are dealt to the poker hand for the player. The final hand is compared to the second Table of Values. If the

5 player has a winning hand according to such second Table of Values, a payout on the wager is made and the game is concluded. If no winning combination is achieved the game is concluded.

Players succeed by obtaining a hand/slot, or hands/slots, that contains a winning combination of elements according to defined combination rankings. If a player's

10 hand/slot contains a winning combination, the player receives payment on his or her wager. If a player's hand/slot does not contain a winning combination, that player loses his or her wager.

The steps and functions of a controller are established on software and take place electronically in video games to provide and distribute electronic designation of playing

15 elements, to maintain control of play of the game for plural players, and to sequence the steps of the game properly, while providing for selections made by a player, or players. Such game controller is also responsible for collecting wagers that are lost and making payments to winners, according to the applicable game of poker.

Referring to Figure 2, the illustrated embodiment of the invention may be housed

20 in a slot machine cabinet 60 including a decorative panel 63 for displaying advertising, a trademark, a decorative picture, a brief description of game instructions, Tables of Values for winning combinations, and the like. A coin entry slot 66 is provided to receive coins, tokens or game chips (hereinafter coins) for wagering on a play of the game. A payout

tray or coin hopper 68 is disposed on the front of cabinet 60 for holding coins dispensed in the course of a game.

Preferably, a game display means comprises a video display screen 70 controlled to display indicia images as described herein. The video screen is preferably of the touch sensitive variety, having a touch sensitive input area 73 located on its display surface on which player selections for play of the game described herein are to be made.

Referring to Figure 3, a block diagram illustration of processing components for performing functions according to the present invention is shown. A central processing unit (CPU) 74 is connected to touch sensitive input area 73 for receiving player input. The central processing unit 74 receives player input and controls the play of the game. CPU 74 also controls the display of images (characters, numbers, and symbols) on video screen 70 to operate each unit. A display controller 77 controls the display of images to video screen 70.

A storage device 80 is constituted of a ROM, a hard disk, or the like, and stores a program for playing the slot machine game, symbol patterns of each playing element, and the like. RAM 81 is used for storing data input from the touch sensitive input 73, such as a score list indicating the contents of played games, the number of credited coins, and the like.

In an alternate embodiment, an amplifier 83 drives speaker 84 for generating sounds to resemble shuffling cards, to highlight game result conditions, game termination, and the like.

A coin sensor 86 detects a coin inserted into the coin entry slot 66. The hopper 68 ejects credited coins.

New game concepts are based on multiple chances to obtain a winning hand for a single wager; that is, the first predetermined number of hands is dealt and each hand is dealt the same number of elements to complete the hand for the selected game being played. Any one of such first hands may obtain a winning combination. The number of

5   elements to be dealt is established when a player at a machine selects a type of game to be played. It is intended that all games in which a player has multiple chances to obtain a winning hand for a single wager are included in this invention.

Among the advantages of the invention are the simplicity of play and ease of administration. Novel concepts of this invention provide for games that are easy to

10   administer and fun to play.

The game is preferably played in video poker machines, computers, video game machines, and hand-held, mechanical, or video poker devices. A video machine can enable a single player to play more than one hand at a time and can be used to accommodate a plurality of players.

15   As can be seen from the description of the embodiments, the present invention is readily adaptable to play on a computer or video game. A person skilled in the art of computer and video game construction, as well as those skilled in other arts, will incorporate the method and conduct of this invention in such computer and video games.

In a preferred embodiment, a plurality of slot machine devices, as taught herein,

20   can be connected to a central controller, which can be used to maintain a jackpot prize schedule for all devices in a network of devices. In this manner, several gaming establishments can combine to offer a single prize larger than any one establishment.

Alternatively, each slot machine device can be adapted for maintaining a jackpot prize schedule for independent operation.

The invention has been described with references to a preferred embodiment. While specific values, relationships, materials and steps have been set forth for purposes of describing concepts of the invention, it will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the basic concepts and operating principles of the invention as broadly described. It should be recognized that, in the light of the above teachings, those skilled in the art could modify those specifics without departing from the invention taught herein. Having now fully set forth the preferred embodiments and certain modifications of the concept underlying the present invention, various other embodiments as well as certain variations and modifications of the embodiments herein shown and described will obviously occur to those skilled in the art upon becoming familiar with said underlying concept. It is intended to include all such modifications, alternatives and other embodiments insofar as they come within the scope of the appended claims or equivalents thereof. It should be understood, therefore, that the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically set forth herein. Consequently, the present embodiments are to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.